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Impact of Emotional Labor on Organizational Role Stress – A Study in the Services Sector in India

Madhuree Modekurti-Mahato^a*; Dr. Pranab Kumar^b; Dr. Prageetha G. Raju^c^aAssistant Professor, Usha Martin Academy, Bootimore, Ranchi, Jharkhand^bDept. of Management, Birla Inst. Of Technology, Lalpur, Ranchi, Jharkhand^cIBS, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract

The present study examines the impact of emotional labour on role related outcomes viz., organizational role stress in the services sector in India. Review of literature reveals that emotional labour studies in India hardly have a presence and just about 1% of studies have been researched empirically. This study tries to corroborate the emotional labour and its consequential impact on employee related outcomes in the Indian context as confirmed by numerous studies in the western context. Study reveals that there is positive and moderate relationship between emotional labour and organizational role stress for the overall sample irrespective of the demographic influences. This relationship proved to be higher and positive for the female married segment thus creating latitude for policymakers to examine the nuances.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +0-000-000-0000 ; fax: +0-000-000-0000 .
E-mail address: madhuri.modekurti@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Traditional Organizations operated largely under predictable business environments and were driven towards premeditated consensus. According to (Malhotra Y., 2000) the latest in-thing is a dynamic and discontinuous change which has unseated the former organizational routines and underlying assumptions. Even the 'best services' of yesterday have transformed to become the 'worst practices' while core competencies turned into core rigidities. The role of employees and their attitudes have been the focal point of many studies as they help craft the smooth transformations for organizations into one that is modern, suitable and performing. The overall implications for creating right employee attitudes and positive perceptions can be studied for an upsurge in employee productivity, organizational growth and effectiveness and as a general boost in the quality of work life and satisfaction amongst employees. Employees' attitudes are largely influenced by the core of emotions they experience both within and outside their workplace. Emotions are created through the perceptions generated out of cognitive appraisal of the situation at hand which can determine the well-being. Emotional well-being in its experience and expression has been a chief construct of interest for researchers owing to its implications. Though emotions in organizations existed for a long time, organizational behavioural frameworks started giving acceptance and consideration to this only recently (Brief and Weiss, 2002). This in itself is an indication of the lack of tangible evidences in this research field and helps to bring in novelty and freshness to this subject of research. Emotions have gained widespread popularity with the growth in services sector contributions; team based structures and raised the levels of interdependence amongst the various departments and employees alike. Psychologists are of the view that people bring in their mental and affective processes to work. Sociologists also suggest along the same lines that social exchanges are an inevitable part of organizations. Due to this the emotions so expressed during the interpersonal interactions gain centrality. Even historically, emotions in organizations have been undervalued in favor of rationality with dualistic assumptions made regarding the two (Dougherty & Drumheller, 2006). However these dualistic assumptions have become archaic as organizations are re-branding their corporate images as favourable to customers and in the process have realized that employees' attitudes facilitate the same.

2. Overview of emotional labor

With awareness and realizations about work based emotions escalating, research in the area of emotions is done primarily under work or social settings. Over the years, the scope of this research has broadened itself to lead us to a newer concept of "Emotional Labor". Emotional Labor, as advocated by Arlie Hochschild is all about 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display for a wage'. To start with, emotional labor research started exploring role related aspects. The role based research reviewed "role sending" and "receiving" and the psychological presence of the employee during the actual performance in the role becomes a major determinant in deciding the effectiveness of the role outcomes. (Kahn, 1990) further emphasizes that people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively, and emotionally, in the roles they perform, even as they maintain the integrity of the boundaries between who they are and the roles they occupy. This leads to the

momentary role attachment and detachment. Research in the area of Emotional Labour and Role based interactions has constantly identified the concomitant linkages between the two. Over the years Emotional Labor research has graduated itself from a mere qualitative approach to a more reliable quantitative approach. The more recent of the researches by (Yagil & Liraz, 2013) have focused on psychological autonomy that enhances behavioural expression of authenticity. Authenticity during service encounters can result in dedication, positive emotions, and good interaction with customers. The scope of this research has extended itself to consider some of the uncommon professions to conduct a variety of interesting studies. The professions range from adventure guides (Sharpe, 2005; Torland, 2013), flight attendants (Williams, 2003), fast-food employees (Tan, Foo & Kwek, 2004), hotel employees (Hwa, 2012), call centre employees (Zapf et. al., 2003), waitresses (Paules, 1991), amusement park employees (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989), cashiers (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987), 911 dispatchers (Shuler & Sypher, 2000), police officers (Martin, 1999), Construction professionals (Lingard & Francis, 2005), Health care workers (Karl & Peluchette, 2006; Lewis, 2012), Teaching professionals (Naring, Briet & Brouwers, 2006) to name a few.

3. Standardization of Emotions in Service Organizations

Researchers increasingly are recognizing important and unique demands and far-reaching consequences associated with the customer-management interface. According to (Schneider et. al, 2005) under service settings, customer satisfaction becomes significant. Employees experiences in their work worlds is correlated with the experiences they provide for customers, and that, it is these customer experiences that get translated into customer satisfaction. Proliferation in the services sector work has created “customer oriented bureaucracy”. In fact organizations are mandating new skills for their workforce as they are primarily engaged in face-to-face or voice-to-voice interactions with customers’ in service-based economies (Payne, 2009). These service based interactions are the new revolutionized work forms, a symbolism of the incredible growth in the services sector, steady downfall in trade unionism and de-regularized industrial relations. All the changes that occurred at the organizational and industrial level have coerced the redesign of newer employment practices, skills and relationships that also impose emotional restraints on the employees and are branded as Emotional Display Rules. Emotion regulations and display rules in organizations are largely associated with the concept of Emotional Labour. Emotional Labour refers to how individuals manage their emotions as part of the work role (Hochschild, 1983). Most research on Emotional Labour assumes that organizations specify display rules that serve as standards for the appropriate expression of emotions.

Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005) also defined Emotional Labour as the process of regulating one’s emotional displays in response to display rules so that work goals can be achieved. The basic purpose of display rules is to dictate the emotions that employees express and are intended to facilitate the attainment of work goals. (Zapf et. al, 1999) also argued that the personal relationships with patients, clients, or children are very demanding and require a high amount of empathy and emotional involvement in order to avoid treating other people like objects. In such

professions, since the management of emotions becomes fundamental, employees' constantly work under emotional boundary conditions to create a superior service climate.

4. A Conceptual Understanding of Emotional Labor

Emotions have come to be recognized as integral to a work life. According to (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988), emotions are typically viewed as intra-psychic states caused by factors such as job characteristics, stress, relationships with supervisors, or compensation. (Inigo et. al, 2007) state that these intra-psychic states of emotions are an important requirement in a number of jobs and play a role in influencing work-related outcomes for both employees as well as organizations. Researchers have tried to establish the linkage between emotions and work related outcomes with the help of action theory based approach. As "Work" & "Labor" are multidisciplinary concepts, researchers have positioned that work activities hold the psychological components of work thereby connecting the objective work environment to employees' behavior. Gosserand and Diefendorff (2005) also attempted to define emotional labor as the process of regulating one's emotional displays in response to display rules so that work goals can be achieved. The basic rationale behind this is to dictate the emotions that employees express in order to manipulate the attainment of work goals. The emotional labor process also involves a constant comparison between the emotional displays of oneself and the institutionalized display rules. If an inconsistency between displays and display rules is detected, emotion regulation strategies in the form of surface acting and deep acting are adopted. (Grandey, 2000) defines surface acting, as the suppression of one's felt emotions and faking the desired emotions, and deep acting, as the modification of one's feelings in order to display the appropriate emotions. In fact varied researches have tried to bring in a conceptual clarity to the theory of Emotional Labor by elaborately defining its process, antecedents and organizational implications. (Lin Chu Kay Hei, 2002) has stated that Emotional Labor is the degree of manipulation of one's inner feelings or outward behavior to display the appropriate emotion in response to display rules or occupational norms. Emotional work, under Emotional Labor context, is defined as behaviours performed to improve emotional wellbeing in others and to create cooperative and positive social relationships (Strazdins, 2000). (Hochschild, 1983; Steinberg and Figart, 1999) describe that emotional labor is more relational rather than the task-based aspect of the work that is primarily found in the service economy. Hayes and Kleiner (2001) associate emotional labor with estrangement. Any employee operating under emotional labor contexts either segregates the self and role thus exhibiting healthy estrangement or becomes estranged from acting altogether. (Welch, 1997; Bulan et al., 1997; Mann, 1997; Schaubroeck and Jones, 2000; Zapf, 2002) also declare that emotional labour is a phenomenon which can amount to emotion exploitation and can cause depression, alienation, exhaustion and loss of identity. (Brannan, 2005) have tried to look at the Emotional labour concept from a monetary perspective by defining it as the feeling management which is performed as part of paid work, serving the interests of the employers in maximising surplus value.

5. The Antecedents and Consequences of Emotional Labor

Several researchers have looked into the concept of Emotional Labour by considering different influencing variables. (Liu et. al, 2004) have considered negative affectivity and political skill as antecedents to Emotional Labour whilst Political Behaviour and Job Induced tension have been identified as its consequences. This particular research has deliberately chosen the dispositional traits to check their levels of influencing capacity on emotional labour. Negative Affectivity is one dispositional trait possessed by individuals that make them to experience more of negative emotions over varied time and situations. Political skill combines social incisiveness while Political behaviour is an extra-role behaviour adopted by individuals for their personal gains. This study's results indicated that negative affectivity and political skill were significantly related to employee perceived emotional labour, which further influenced employees' use of political behaviours and job-induced tension. Interestingly another prominent study by (Groves and Vance, 2009) tried to investigate in the context of high emotional labor jobs, the relationship between balanced thinking and affective organizational commitment (AOC). Their results demonstrate that linear thinking style (preference for reliance on logic and objectivity) was positively associated with the regulation of emotions, nonlinear thinking (preference for feelings, intuition and sensations) was related to utilizing emotions to facilitate thinking, and a reasonable use of linear and nonlinear thinking was a predictor of overall EI. Linear thinking style promotes "strategic EI", the modern day "Surface Acting" while nonlinear thinking style results in "experiential EI" and is the "Deep Acting" Emotional Labor.

Researchers have also focused on an array of variables like organizational or service culture (Syed, 2008; Curtis & Upchurch, 2008), role stress (Harris, 2002; Williams, 2003; Zapf et. al., 2003; Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Lingard & Francis, 2005; Pravettoni et. al. 2007; Murray and Rostis, 2007; Biron et. al. 2008;), role efficacy, role overload, burnout, emotional exhaustion (Morris & Feldman, 1996; Zapf et. al., 1999; Bakker et. al., 2003; Lewig & Dollard, 2003; Michinov, 2005), aesthetic labor (Stevens, 2012; Williams, 2003), sales performance (Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988;) self-monitoring (Scott, Barnes & Wagner, 2012) etc.

6. Background

After reviewing sufficient literature, the authors were convinced that there is a link between emotional labour and role stress. Thus a study has been undertaken to investigate the presence of emotional labour with its role stress linkages in Indian service organizations. The purpose is to improve the understanding of the employee experiences under intensive emotional labour environments.

7. Methodology

The present study has chosen a sample of 411 employees who are currently employed on a permanent basis in the services sector within India. Since the services sector was larger in scope and it created a time and cost limitation to the researchers, to systematize the sample selection, this study has limited the industries to seven as per the

information listed on www.business.gov.in web portal. The industries thus chosen were Education, Health, IT & ITES, Media, Real Estate, Retail and Tourism. The study was conducted for an overall period of 12-18 months. Around 35 major cities were considered for the study for which around 1050 hard copy questionnaires and close to 400 mailers were sent out for the purpose of data collection. Around 467 questionnaires were returned of which 411 were found usable. Thus, an effective response rate of 28.34% was achieved. The overall sample distribution stands as below:

AGE	Under 20	21-30	31-40	41-50	Over 50		
	4	232	141	23	11		
INCOME	0-5L	6-10L	11-15L				
	376	28	7				
GENDER	Male	Female					
	304	107					
EDUCATION	Undergraduate	Graduate	Post Grad	Others			
	36	208	141	26			
EXPERIENCE	Lessthan5yrs	6-10yrs	11-15yrs	16-20yrs	Over20yrs		
	197	148	38	15	13		
MARITAL STATUS	Married	Single					
	173	238					
INDUSTRY	Education	Health	IT & ITES	Media	Real Estate	Retail	Tourism
	48	63	96	49	46	68	41
GEOG. REGION	Central	East	North	South	West		
	62	83	96	112	58		

The two variables, emotional labor and organizational role stress, that were primarily investigated in this study, were administered using standardized questionnaires.(Liu Yongmei et. al. 2004) instrument was used for emotional labor while (Pareek & Purohit, 2009) instrument was used for organizational role stress.

Based on the literature reviewed, we argue that emotional labor creates negative feelings within employees and leads to higher role stress. Also, we opine that it is difficult to create a service work culture that is devoid of customer bureaucracy and rules for employees' positive workplace behaviour. This kind of service environment has slowly and naturally found its way into the Indian service organizations. In addition to this argument, we also strongly sense that gender differences can play a huge role in influencing the relationship between our study variables. Therefore, we hypothesised as under:

Hypothesis 1: Emotional labour influences Organizational Role Stress of employees favourably.

Hypothesis 2: There is a higher and significant relationship between Emotional Labour and Organizational Role Stress for the female employees

8. Data Analysis

The data analysis is done using the Path analysis model with smart PLS software. (Wright, 1918) considers path analysis as a flexible means of relating the correlation coefficients between variables in a multiple system to the functional relations among them.

9. Findings and Discussion

Prior to the running of path analysis, factor analysis was administered on the Organizational Role Stress Scale and accordingly 16 factors were scaled down that explained a total variance of 62.93%. Thereafter the path analysis model developed using a sample of the Indian services sector employees, produced the following results:

10. Overview

	AVE (Average Variance Extracted)	Composite Reliability	R Square	Cronbach's Alpha	Communality	Redundancy
EL	0.3181	0.8224	0.0000	0.7628	0.3181	0.0000
ORS	0.3427	0.8918	0.1697	0.8724	0.3427	0.0530

11. Factor Loadings

EL	AEX 0.6337	CH 0.5746	ED 0.5089	EP 0.5318	EQ 0.4768
	ES 0.5276	EV 0.6234	HQ 0.6148	PE 0.5590	WE 0.5678

ORS	F1 0.5875	F2 0.6978	F3 0.5113	F4 0.6332	F5 0.5324	F6 0.4746	F7 0.6202	F8 0.6582
	F9 0.5954	F10 0.6103	F11 0.6072	F12 0.6132	F13 0.6001	F14 0.5049	F15 0.4551	F16 0.6070

12. Summarised results

Relationship		Regression estimate
EL	→ ORS (Total Sample)	0.169
EL	→ ORS (Male Sample)	0.174
EL	→ ORS (Female Sample)	0.253
EL	→ ORS (Female Married)	0.474

The coefficient of determination for the model indicated that around 17% of the fraction of variance is explained for the overall sample. A steady increase in the regression estimates was observed and the highest was detected for the married female population. The coefficient of determination shot up considerably to 47%. This sharp increase in the coefficient of determination gives rise to an argument that the married female employees are understood to have issues relating to adaptability and work-life balance. This is primarily due to the inconsistent work demands, time demands and a precarious balancing act done by them whilst operating in a patriarchal Indian society. Though the overall sample of 411 employees indicated a low 0.17 fraction of variance for the model, according to Cohen (1988), it can be considered as a medium effect especially for behavioural science research. In his book on statistical power analysis, Cohen suggests that R – squared values of 0.09 and above have a medium effect and need to be treated that way for behavioural sciences. Therefore drawing inputs from the literature and previous behavioural studies, we conclude that this study was worth in its contributions because it dealt those areas that prove vital and indispensable for policymakers.

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